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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/082,642	02/25/2002	Michael B. McLeod	2020310	3662

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EXAMINER

LUONG, SHIAN TINH NHAN

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3728

DATE MAILED: 01/21/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/082,642

Applicant(s)

McLeod et al *24*

Examiner

Shian T Luong

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claims ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are objected to by the Examiner.
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

Attachment(s)

- 15) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 16) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 17) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 5.
- 18) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) ____.
- 19) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 20) ☐ Other: .

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

1. Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The phrase “a cover operably configured to be positioned atop the uppermost one of said at least one substantially open-topped shipping tray of the at least one shipping unit.” is confusing and inaccurate when there is only one open-topped shipping tray. There is no uppermost tray when there are less than 2 trays for comparison. Also, it is not clear whether applicant is positively claiming the “at least one other shipping tray” in claim 1.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1-12, 14-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Young (US 5,390,847) or Muise, Jr. (US 6,354,487) in view of Flanagan et al. (US 6,050,419) and/or Bullock (US 6,227,779). Young discloses a stackable tray with protruding tabs 22 to engage a stackable lid 28 or another stackable tray. Muise, Jr. discloses stackable trays and lids. The open topped trays have tabs 38 to engage the apertures in the lids. The tab 26 in the lid allows additional stacking of trays and lids. What Young or Muise, Jr. appears to lack is a binding member. But Flanagan et al. teaches a strip as shown in Figures 1-3 that stabilizes the stacked articles by using Velcro. Bullock also teaches application of adhesive on a securing strip

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24 to secure the stacked articles. It would have been obvious in view of Bullock or Flanagan et al. to provide the binding member around the stacked articles to secure the articles in a stable condition.

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to make the binding band out of metal, since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *In re Leshin*, 125 USPQ 416.

4. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the references applied above with respect to claim 1, further in view of Corrugated Common Footprint.

Although Young or Muise, Jr. shows identical stackable trays, it would have been obvious to stack other non-similar trays with alignable tabs. This is shown by Corrugated Common footprint wherein a smaller stackable tray is on a top portion of a larger stackable tray. Hence, interchange different stackable trays are within the knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art.

Conclusion

5. Telephone inquiries regarding the status of applications or other general questions, by persons entitled to the information, should be directed to the group clerical personnel and not to the examiners. In as much as the official records and applications are located in the clerical section of the examining groups, the clerical personnel can readily provide status information without contacting the examiners, M.P.E.P. 203.08. The **Group clerical receptionist number is (703) 308-1148 or the Tech Center 3700 Customer Service Center number is (703) 306-5648.**


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If in receiving this Office Action it is apparent to applicant that certain documents are missing, e.g., copies of references cited, form PTO-1449, form PTO-892, etc., requests for copies of such papers should be directed to Donna Monroe at (703) 308-2209.

For applicant's convenience, the formal FAX number is (703) 872-9306. This practice may be used for filing papers not requiring a fee. It may also be used for filing papers which require a fee by applicants who authorize charges to a PTO deposit account. Please identify Examiner Luong of Art Unit 3728 at the top of your cover sheet of any correspondence submitted.

Inquiries concerning the merits of the examination should be directed to Shian Luong whose telephone number is (703) 308-2039. The examiner can normally be reached on M-H from 7:00am to 4:00pm EST.

STL
January 16, 2004


Primary Examiner
Shian Luong
Art Unit 3728